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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6350

November 4, 1999

VIA FACSIMILE

202-690-6262

Ms. Nancy-Ann Min DeParle
Administrator
Health Care Financing Administration
Room 314G
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator DeParle:

The Senate Special Committee on Aging held a hearing today, entitled "HCFA Regional Offices: Inconsistent, Uneven, Unfair." At this hearing the General Accounting Office (GAO) released a report (the Report) evaluating the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) Regional Offices' ability to carry out their duties adequately and consistently.¹ I am deeply concerned with the findings of the Report, specifically those findings which highlight possible quality of care shortcomings within Missouri.

The Report makes an example of Missouri state agency surveyors, stating that HCFA comparative surveys found serious deficiencies in Missouri nursing homes, which were not identified by Missouri state agency surveyors. The Report goes on to say that "HCFA officials [said] that observational surveys were not designed to identify all deficiencies . . . [and] that of the 631 observational surveys completed . . . only 8 (1 percent) identified higher-level deficiencies than the state." All eight of these observational surveys were from the Kansas City Region.

In light of the aforementioned findings, coupled with complaints flowing into my office from, among others, Missouri-nursing home residents and their families, I request that supporting documentation from the Report, as it concerns the Kansas City Region, be provided to my staff. In addition, the Report indicates that states are contractually obligated to HCFA and must conduct on-site surveys to ensure that nursing homes provide quality care to residents. My second request, therefore, is that copies of all contractual agreements, dating from 1995 to the present, between HCFA and Missouri state agencies are provided, in addition to any annual budget-call letters, guidance memoranda, i.e., "Dear State Medicaid Director" letters or the like.

¹Nursing Home Care: Enhanced HCFA Oversight of State Programs Would Better Ensure Quality, (GAO/HEHS-00-6, November 1999).

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Finally, I would appreciate receiving this information no later than November 10, 1999. If you or your staff have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Dan Donovan at 202-224-5175. Thank you in advance for your prompt response to my request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Bond", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christopher S. Bond
Chairman

cc: Mr. Thomas W. Lenz
ARA, DMSO
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